

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Living with Bears

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Bears have been in the news a lot recently, most notably related to a hiker who was pulled from his hammock by a bear in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. According to the Park Service's report, the young man, and his father, who were travelling together, had properly stored their equipment, food, and packs on aerial food storage cables.

I've previously spoken about how camping in parts of Chattahoochee and Pisgah National Forests requires the use of bear-proof food containers, and camping in some areas is currently prohibited due to bears. This most recent incident in the Smokies has led the park to close several campsites and an Appalachian Trail shelter.

With healthy bear populations and increasing use of natural areas, it becomes imperative that we keep bears in mind when travelling outdoors, especially spending the night in the backcountry. The latest incident in the Smokies demonstrates that even traditional precautions – like hanging food out of reach - aren't always enough to discourage unwanted interactions. The Park Service reminds everyone to be "Bear Aware" and follow a few simple steps:

- Don't store food in tents;
- Store food in a bear proof container;
- Clean up food or garbage around the campsite, including fire rings and grills;
- Do not leave food unattended

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.